



**CHI St. Alexius Health**

*Imagine better health.<sup>SM</sup>*

**Archway Mental Health Services**



*Pregnancy and  
Postpartum Mood  
and Anxiety*

## Do you know the number one complication of pregnancy and childbirth?

### *Anxiety and depression*

These illnesses affect up to one in five women during pregnancy or the first-year postpartum. They are caused by changes in biology, psychology, hormones and environment.

#### *New mothers experiencing anxiety or depression say:*

- I'm supposed to be happy...
- Why do I feel so sad?
- I worry all the time.
- I am having thoughts that are upsetting or scary.
- I wish I could just run away
- Why am I such a failure?
- Why do I feel so guilty?
- Why can't I snap out of it?
- Everything would be better if I got a good night's sleep.

#### *Remember...*

*You are not alone. You are not to blame.  
With help, you will be well.*

## Things you can do

### LEARN

Learn as much as you can about pregnancy, postpartum depression and anxiety from professional websites or books.

*Some suggestions include:*

- Visit Postpartum Support International's website at [postpartum.net](http://postpartum.net)
- Visit Postpartum Progress website at [postpartumprogress.com](http://postpartumprogress.com)
- Visit [support4nicuparents.org](http://support4nicuparents.org) for NICU parents
- *Becoming a Calm Mom: How to Manage Stress and Enjoy the First Year of Motherhood* by Deborah Roth Ledley
- *This Isn't What I Expected [2nd edition]: Overcoming Postpartum Depression* by Karen Kleinman and Valerie Davis Raskin, MD

### SLEEP

Getting four to five hours of uninterrupted sleep is the most effective, least expensive thing a new mother can do to start feeling better.

### NUTRITION

New moms should eat every time baby eats. Water and a high-protein snack (yogurt, cheese stick, nuts) are good mini-meals.

### EXERCISE

Gentle exercise such as a walk around the block can have terrific benefits. The combined effect of change of scenery, fresh air, Vitamin D from the sun and endorphins released in the body can have a positive impact on mood.

### TIME OFF

No other job is so demanding, requiring being on duty 24 hours a day, seven days a week. New moms need time off to recharge and rejuvenate, especially if feeling overwhelmed. The challenge is to identify and meet those needs, whether it's taking a shower, reading the newspaper or talking with an old friend.

### SOCIAL SUPPORT

New moms often feel the need to connect with other new mothers, especially if experiencing anxiety or depression. There are several MOPS groups in the area. Check out [mops.org](http://mops.org) for locations. Social support can also be practical support: providing meals, babysitting, driving older children, running errands, doing laundry, tidying the house, etc.

### MEDICATION

Sometimes medication is needed to lessen persistent anxiety or depression. Several medications commonly used to treat anxiety or depression are widely considered safe to use during pregnancy or while breastfeeding. These medications can be prescribed by primary care physicians, obstetrician/gynecologists or psychiatrists.

### TALK THERAPY

New moms may need to address topics such as their role as mother, changes in relationships and communications with partner. Talking with licensed psychologists who specialize in this area may help. Sara Kenney, PsyD, and Lea Berentson, PsyD, at CHI St. Alexius Health's Archway Mental Health Services have specialized training.

*People in crisis should call their local emergency number (911), go to an emergency room, or call the National Suicide Prevention Hotline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255)*



## How are you feeling now

While many women experience some mild mood change or “the blues” during or after the birth of a child, one in five women experience more significant symptoms of depression or anxiety. One in 10 dads become depressed during the first year.

- Have you been much more down, depressed or sad than usual?
- Have you been unable to sleep because your thoughts are on overdrive?
- Have you, or others, noticed that you’ve been much more irritable or short-tempered?
- Have you found yourself crying “out of the blue”?
- Has your stomach been “in a knot” to the point that you can’t eat?
- Have you been more jumpy, shaky or jittery?
- Have you noticed that things you normally look forward to are no longer fun or interesting?
- Have you noticed that you have a hard time concentrating or are excessively distracted?
- Is it harder for you to “get going” or find the energy and motivation to do things that normally come easily?
- Have you thought of harming or killing yourself or others?
- Have you experienced thoughts or images that frighten or upset you?

**If you answered “yes” to any of these questions, you may have a mood or anxiety disorder.**

Any parent can suffer from pregnancy or postpartum mood or anxiety disorders. However, with informed care you can prevent a worsening of symptoms and can fully recover. It is essential to recognize symptoms and reach out as soon as possible so that you can get the help you need and deserve. Don’t give up! It may take more than one try to get the right help you need.



**Lea Berentson, PsyD**  
*Licensed Psychologist*

Dr. Berentson received her Doctor of Psychology in Clinical Psychology and Trauma from Minnesota School of Professional Psychology at Argosy University in Eagan, Minnesota and completed an Internship at Standing Rock Sioux Reservation in Fort Yates, North Dakota. She provides mental health services to youth and adults struggling with a variety of mental health issues, especially to pregnant and post-partum moms. She conducts a wide variety of psychological assessments and provides individual and group Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT). She has past experiences in correctional settings, community mental health, rural and hospital settings.



**Sara Kenney, PsyD**  
*Licensed Psychologist*

Dr. Kenney received her Bachelor of Arts in Psychology from Moorhead State University in Moorhead, Minnesota and her Doctor of Philosophy in Psychology from Minnesota School of Professional Psychology at Argosy University in Bloomington, Minnesota. She has particular interest in working with pregnant and post-partum moms, individuals with depression and anxiety, and treating Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) using Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing. She is a member of the American Psychological Association, Postpartum Support International and Marce Society.



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